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HOW FAR DO BIRDS GO
WHEN THEY FLY SOUTH!

The marking of migratory water-fowl, as practiced by the collaborators of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, has given evidence that it will be a most interesting and important investigation. Although the work has been in progress for only two years, notable results have already been secured.

The ducks and other birds, whose movements are being studied by this method, are caught, mainly by the use of special traps, light aluminum bands placed on one leg, and then released. Every band bears a serial number and the legend "Biol. Surv., Wash., D.C." In the Washington office of the Biological Survey, these banded birds are card indexed so that when a hunter secures a duck bearing one of these bands and reports the data connected with its capture, by referring to the card file, the route covered by the bird in question can be easily ascertained. When such records are received, the hunter is advised where the bird was banded, while the person who attached the band is informed where it was secured.

During the fall shooting seasons for the last few years, a large number of mallards and black ducks, with a few blue-winged teal and other species, have been banded at a small lake about 20 miles north of Toronto, Ontario, and many interesting returns have been received.

Long Range Record.

The best 'long range' record for these Canadian ducks is that of a blue-winged teal, banded September 24, 1920, and killed two months and seven days later, in the Caroni Swamp, near Port of Spain, on the island of Trinidad, just off the coast of Venezuela. The shortest flight that this bird could have made would be over 3,000 miles. It is a well-known fact that blue-winged teals and certain other ducks that breed in North America spend the winter season in South America, but it was rather a surprise to learn that those individuals that had bred in Canada would make the long flight to South America, because the species also winters in small numbers in the Gulf region and it is to that area that the more northern birds might be expected to go.

The return records of ducks of other species, banded near Toronto, have afforded valuable data relative to their migration. The lake where the banding was done, Lake Scugog, is surrounded by marshes and thus offers excellent opportunities for the ducks to feed and rest before starting the long flight to the south. The trapping and banding was carried on continuously through the autumn, so that by the time the big southward movement began several hundred birds had been marked. At this time the season was open from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and the migrating birds had to run a veritable gauntlet of sportsmen. A large number of 'return records' were therefore received.

Mallards and Black Ducks.

In tracing the route of these birds it seemed apparent that the mallards and black ducks traveled together and their course from Lake Scugog was southwestward along the shores of Lake Erie by way of the St. Clair flats. Here the route divided, the majority continuing toward the southwest, cross-country to the Ohio River, hence to the Mississippi Valley where many of them spent the winter. The second group, that parted from their fellows in the vicinity of Lake Erie, took a southeasterly route, crossing the Alleghenies and reaching the Atlantic coast by way of Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. It is interesting to note that although both of these ducks are present and the black duck is plentiful along the coast of New England, none of the birds marked at Lake Scugog were taken in that region. The question that naturally arises is: Where do those ducks come from? So far we only know that some breed in that area, but we do not know just where the migrating birds come from that use that route. Bird banding will probably supply the answer when it has been applied more intensively at a larger number of stations.